

Message Text

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14

ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5673

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 32687

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, FR

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT POMPIDOU'S TV INTERVIEW

POUCHED: BORDEAUX, LYON, MARSEILLE, MARTINIQUE, NICE, STRASBOURG

GENEVA PLEASE PASS TO SECRETARY'S PARTY

REF: PARIS 32317, 32543 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT POMPIDOU'S INTERVIEW ON NATIONAL
RADIO/TV DECEMBER 20 WAS MARKED BY SOBER, SERIOUS STATEMENT OF
CONCERN OVER DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. HE APPEALED TO UNITY, COOPERA-
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TION AND TRADITIONAL FRUGALITY OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE TO HELP SOLVE
THEM. HE EXPRESSED STRONG CONFIDENCE IN PRIME MINISTER MESSMER.
FOREIGN AFFAIRS ASPECTS OF INTERVIEW DEVOTED EXCLUSIVELY TO
CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE. DEFENSE POLICY NOT TREATED. WHILE DOMESTIC

PROBLEMS REMAIN, POMPIDOU'S REASSERTION OF LEADERSHIP WAS INTENDED TO COUNTER ACCUSATIONS OF DRIFT AND INDECISION. GOF MUST NOW TRANSLATE PRESIDENT'S MORAL APPEAL INTO ACTION PROGRAM.
END SUMMARY

2. DOMESTIC MATTERS: POMPIDOU SAID HE IS PRIMARILY CONCERNED OVER UNEMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS. ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN IN FRANCE'S LEADING TRADING PARTNERS WOULD HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON FRENCH EMPLOYMENT PICTURE. POMPIDOU EXPRESSED HOPE THAT HIS APPEAL FOR SUPPORT WOULD RECEIVE A RESPONSE OTHER THAN "ABSURD STRIKES AND RIDICULOUS DEMONSTRATIONS." ON CURRENT PRICE SITUATION, POMPIDOU NOTED THAT THE FRENCH WERE "WAKING UP FROM A TOO BEAUTIFUL DREAM," AND THAT GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION WAS NOT BAD, EVEN IF SOME PEOPLE FAILED TO REALIZE IT. NEVERTHELESS, PRICE INFLATION WAS A MATTER OF CONCERN. SOME CAUSES WERE BEYOND GOF CONTROL. BUT OTHERS COULD BE DEALT WITH BY ALL THE FRENCH UNITING, BOTH CONSUMERS AND PRODUCERS, TO HELP GOF KEEP INEVITABLE PRICE RISES AS REASONABLE AS POSSIBLE. THIS WOULD ENABLE GOF TO AVOID IMPOSING "BRUTAL MEASURES" WHICH ARE INEFFICIENT, DISLIKED, AND CAUSE SUFFERING IN ALL SOCIAL CATEGORIES.

3. ON PETROLEUM, POMPIDOU DENIED THAT FRANCE WAS IN A PRIVILEGED POSITION BUT NOTED THAT MANY OTHER COUNTRIES WERE IN WORSE SHAPE. HE SAID THERE WOULD BE NO FUEL CRISIS FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS. APART FROM PETROLEUM AVAILABILITY, HOWEVER, OIL COST RISE WOULD HAVE EFFECT ON DOMESTIC PRICES GENERALLY. THERE WAS ALSO PROBLEM OF AVAILABILITY OF SOME SPECIFIC PRODUCTS, FOR EXAMPLE BENZINE, MOST OF WHICH FRANCE IMPORTS, ESPECIALLY FROM THE US. FACED WITH EXPORTERS' TENDENCY TO COVER THEIR OWN NEEDS FIRST, GOF IS TAKING MEASURES TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS. IF, HOWEVER, SHORTAGES CONTINUE FOR MONTHS OR YEARS, ALL COUNTRIES WOULD HAVE TO SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES. GOF HAD THE RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE MEASURES TO FACE THESE CONSEQUENCES AND WOULD DO SO. POMPIDOU APPEALED TO THE FRENCH TO ECONOMIZE ENERGY CONSUMPTION, BOTH IN ORDER TO LIMIT OIL IMPORTS AND TO MODERATE THE EFFECT OF OIL PRICE RISE ON PRODUCTION, PARTICULARLY EXPORTS.
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POMPIDOU CHARACTERIZED 1974 AS "A DIFFICULT YEAR." HE CALLED FOR THE UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION OF FRENCH PEOPLE TO AID GOVERNMENT ACTION AND SAID THAT IF THIS OCCURRED, 1974, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD NOT BE EASY, WOULD NOT BE A CATASTROPHE.

4. MINISTERIAL CHANGES: ASKED WHETHER PRIME MINISTER MESSMER WOULD CONTINUE IN OFFICE UNTIL THE END OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TERM (1976), POMPIDOU REFUSED TO GIVE ANY COMMITMENTS BUT STATED EMPHATICALLY HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S CAPABILITIES, LOYALTY AND DEVOTION TO THE PUBLIC GOOD.

5. FOREIGN POLICY: POMPIDOU SAID HE WAS NOT DISSATISFIED WITH COPENHAGEN SUMMIT, THAT HE BELIEVED THAT HIS INITIATIVE TO CON-

WENT IT HAD BEEN USEFUL. THE KEY QUESTION WAS WHETHER THE EC 9 WISHED TO MOVE ALONG THE ROAD TO POLITICAL UNION OR WISHED MERELY TO AGREE ON ECONOMIC MATTERS. ALL PARTICIPANTS CONFIRMED DESIRE TO MOVE TO POLITICAL UNION. DISCUSSION "ON THE MOST DELICATE POLITICAL QUESTIONS" HAD BEEN FREE AND FRANK, "AS IS POSSIBLE WHEN THERE ARE FEW PEOPLE." THERE WAS NOT COMPLETE AGREEMENT; HAD THERE BEEN SO, EUROPEAN UNION WOULD ALREADY BE ACCOMPLISHED. SUMMIT DISCUSSED SPECIFIC PROBLEMS SUCH AS ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION. DISCUSSIONS HAD NOT BEEN USELESS, AS SEEN FROM THE FACT THAT FINANCE MINISTERS HAD SUBSEQUENTLY TAKEN SOME IMPORTANT DECISIONS. RE AID FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, "IN THE WEEKS TO COME IT WILL BE NECESSARY FOR A DECISION TO BE REACHED. FOR POMPIDOU, CREATING EUROPEAN UNION IS A QUESTION OF WILL, AN ACT OF FAITH. POMPIDOU HOPES FOR PROGRESS "TOWARDS A EUROPE IN WHICH STATES WOULD NOT SEE THEIR PERSONALITIES AND THEIR ESSENTIAL INTERESTS SACRIFICED."

6. ASKED ABOUT HIS FUNDAMENTAL POLICY FOR FRANCE, POMPIDOU STATED HIS FIRST OBJECTIVE IS THE "DEVELOPMENT OF FRANCE." ONLY IF FRANCE IS ECONOMICALLY STRONG CAN IT HAVE PROSPERITY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS. "ONLY A STRONG FRANCE CAN PARTICIPATE IN BUILDING EUROPE WITHOUT LOSING ITS PERSONALITY AND SACRIFICING ITS ESSENTIAL INTERESTS. ONLY A STRONG FRANCE CAN HAVE ALLIES WHICH ARE GOOD ALLIES AND NOT MASTERS. ONLY A STRONG FRANCE CAN COOPERATE WITH ALL COUNTRIES, HOWEVER STRONG THEY MAY BE, WITHOUT RETICENCE AND COMPLEXES." APART FROM THAT GENERAL OBJECTIVE, POMPIDOU SAID HE WANTED TO CONFIDENTIAL

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SPARE FRANCE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE FROM THE MISFORTUNES WHICH COULD OCCUR. HE WANTED ESPECIALLY TO SPARE THE LEAST FAVORED OF THE FRENCH POPULATION, SUCH AS HE DID WHEN HE WAS PRIME MINISTER IN MAY 1968. NOW THE THREATS TO FRANCE COME FROM ABROAD, BUT POMPIDOU EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT FRANCE WOULD OVERCOME THEM.

7. COMMENT: POMPIDOU SEEMED ALERT, VIGOROUS AND SURE OF HIMSELF. HE DISPLAYED HIS CUSTOMARY INTELLECTUAL VIGOR. HIS PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, HOWEVER, WILL CAUSE RENEWED SPECULATION ABOUT HIS HEALTH. IN APPEALING TO THE FRENCH TO DISPLAY GOOD SENSE, UNITY AND CIVIC SPIRIT, HE OFFERED HIS OWN AND THE GOVERNMENT'S WILLINGNESS TO DO THEIR PART, BUT WARNED THAT THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT DO IT ALL. EXCEPT FOR THE STATEMENT OF CONFIDENCE IN MESSMER, THE INTERVIEW WAS SHORT ON SPECIFICS BUT CLEAR ON BROAD LINES FRENCH SHOULD FOLLOW. POMPIDOU CALLED FOR A STRONG, UNITED FRANCE TO FACE TEMPORARY PROBLEMS OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

AS WELL AS THE LONG-TERMED POSSIBILITIES OFFERED BY THE CREATION OF EUROPE -- A EUROPE IN WHICH THE PERSONALITY OF FRANCE WOULD BE RESPECTED. THERE WAS NO MENTION OF US-EC

RELATIONS, THE MIDDLE EAST OR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN
THE SOLUTION OF THE ENERGY CRISIS.

8. REACTIONS FROM POLITICAL PARTIES WERE AS EXPECTED. MAJORITY
PARTY LEADERS PRAISED POMPIDOU'S FORTHRIGHTNESS, HONESTY AND
WILLINGNESS TO APPEAL FOR THE HELP OF ALL FRENCH. THE OPPOSITION
DENOUNCED THE SPEECH FOR ITS LACK OF CONTENT AND SPECIFICS.
THE COMMUNISTS, NOT SURPRISINGLY, ACCUSED POMPIDOU OF BLAMING
OTHERS FOR MATTERS FOR WHICH HE WAS HIMSELF RESPONSIBLE.
HOWEVER, THE ABSENCE OF CRITICISM ON SPECIFIC
POINTS BY OPPOSITION POLITICIANS AND LABOR LEADERS IS INDICATIVE
OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HIS SIMPLE AND APPARENTLY FORTHRIGHT
APPROACH.

9. POMPIDOU'S INTERVIEW HAS PUT TO REST NONE OF THE SERIOUS
ISSUES AFFECTING FRANCE'S DOMESTIC SITUATION (PARIS 32317 NOTAL).
HOWEVER, BY HIS VIGOROUS AND AUTHORITATIVE PERFORMANCE ON
NATIONAL TELEVISION, POMPIDOU HAS AT LEAST OFFERED THE MAJORITY
FORCES A RALLYING POINT AT A TIME THE REGIME IS BEING ACCUSED
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OF DRIFT AND INDECISION. THE CHALLENGE
TO MESSMER'S GOVERNMENT NOW IS TO TRANSLATE TH

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